P800148-0794

November 19, 1980

Dear Senator Magnuson:

I am writing in response to your inquiry of October 30 regarding the concerns of Mr. James Symons and his colleagues about South Korea as expressed in his letter of October 27 to President Carter.

We share Mr. Symons' concern over the trial of opposition leader Kim Dae Jung and his associates. The Government of the Republic of Korea is fully aware of our views on the verdicts passed down at the Court Martial, and you may be assured that we have and will continue to make our concerns fully known to the Korean Government.

Mr. Kim's verdict was upheld by an appellate court on November 3. It will now be referred to the Supreme Court for further review. If the Supreme Court upholds the verdict, the President must review the sentence before it is carried out. Our estimate is that the case will not be finally resolved before December. Observers at the appellate trial have reported that the appellants appear to be in good health and are alert in defending themselves against the charges.

We have consistently urged the Korean leadership to move in directions that will allow greater participation in the political process. In this regard, we note that the Korean people gave over 90 percent approval to a new and more liberal constitution in a referendum held on October 22. The constitution provides for the holding of national elections before June 30, 1981. We realize that this is but one step in the process of political development, and much will depend on the spirit with which the constitution is implemented.

The United States has not provided any grant assistance to the Government of Korea for several years. Our AID mission in Korea went out of business in September. We continue to provide limited hard currency credits to allow the Koreans to purchase essential military equipment from American suppliers. We believe these programs, which are at no cost to the American taxpayer, contribute significantly to the defense of South Korea from attack by the North and that any withdrawal of this type of cooperation would be opposed by all political factions in South Korea as well as contribute to potentially dangerous assumptions by North Korea. We are confident that this cooperation contributes to the overall security of the United States.

The Honorable
Warren G. Magnuson,
United States Senate.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY HT DATE 8/18/82
RDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON (S)
E. DERSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED ☐ RELEASABLE ☒
RELEASE DENIED ☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

In closing, we would like to thank Mr. Prance for his thoughtful views he expressed on this [illegible]. While Africa is undergoing a difficult period of transition, we are confident that the spirit and industriousness of the African people will hold them to resolve their internal problems and lead them to a prosperous future.

Sincerely,

J. Brian Atwood
Assistant Secretary
for Congressional Relations

Enclosure:

Correspondence Returned.

Drafted:EA/K:FCAshley:jcm 11/5/80
Control No. 142-0399
Clearances: EA/K:RGRich EA:SPayne H:WIton